

## Transcript: Bryan Smith

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*Today is Wednesday, May 6, 2009. My name is James Crabtree, and I'm interviewing Mr. Bryan Smith for the Texas Veterans Land Board's Voices of Veterans Oral History Program. This interview is taking place by phone. I'm at the General Land Office building in Austin, Texas, and Mr. Smith is at his home in Hillister, Texas. With that said, sir, thanks for taking the time to talk to us today. This is your interview so we'll cover as long as you want to go for. But the main thing we try to focus on is getting an oral history for posterity and for future generations, in particular, about your time in the service. The question I usually always start off with is just ask you to tell us a little bit about background, where you're from, and that sort of thing.*

**Bryan Smith:** All right. I'm from Hillister, Texas. I was born and grew up here. I went to Houston for my exam. They didn't accept me at first and then they called me back, and of course, that was during the Vietnam time. I went back and they accepted me, and I went to Fort Polk for my basic training. I took my basic training on the Vietnam side of the fort. And they all said, "Well, you know where you're going." So when we got through, I ended up at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, assigned to an artillery unit. And when I got up there, there was no such thing. The only artillery they had was an old artillery gun settin' out by the flagpole. So they had to change my orders and all and they put me in an engineer outfit. And I stayed in it for almost, well, the rest of the first year. And then the orders come down to disperse that company and everybody was going to Vietnam. And when I got my orders, they said, told me, they said, "Smith, they've made a mistake on yours." I said, "What do you mean?" Said, "Well, they got you going to Germany, and there's no way 'cause you don't have but about nine months left in the service." So I come home on leave and I sat around worried about where I was going. I went up to, I think it was Fort, in Pennsylvania. I stayed up there for about two weeks figuring they was going to change my orders. I got on a plane and I ended up landing, circled Frankfurt, and I seen snow on the ground. I said, "Well, I guess they did send me to Germany." Still not knowing what was going on. So I spent the rest of the time there. 'Course I had two wrecks while I was in the service. I had one when I was there in Kentucky, and I got to Germany, well, they put me in an armored unit, so I become a mechanic on tanks and all. And while I was serving there, we was out on the ranges, I had a tank that blowed up and we had to bring it in. We was coming in with it and the tow bar broke and it went over the top of us. And the recovery vehicle I was driving was on fire, and the Germans wouldn't even use no foam, nothing to put it out, and it finally just kinda went out. And then I come home early and then I got out over in . . . Went back over to Fort Polk to spend, I think, a week or two, and then I got out over there.

*Let's go back, if we can, real quick to when you first entered the service. Were you drafted?*

**Bryan Smith:** I was drafted.

*You were drafted? Tell us about how that process worked. Did you expect to be drafted, or did you have friends that had already been drafted? That sort of thing.*

**Bryan Smith:** Well, yeah, there was friends that had been drafted before me. The best I remember there was some that went in. But my draft board was over at Livingston, and I went over there. And the lady's name that was over it was Ida Rowe. And they put us all on a bus and sent us to Houston, to have our physicals and all. Well, I had complained some with having back trouble when I went in, and so they sent me across town to some doctor in a Jeep, and come back

and said that it was fine. And then they said . . . I was having trouble with my eyes, so they sent me home. And then they sent me a letter and wanted to know if I needed financial help with my eyes. And I wrote back and told them no. And the next thing I knew, I was in the service.

*Tell us about any of your friends or relatives that had already been drafted. Had you spoken to them when they got drafted?*

**Bryan Smith:** Well, very few of 'em. Most of 'em went to Vietnam, and you know, they don't talk about that much.

*Were you reading the newspaper or watching the TV or listening to the radio a lot to know what was going on over there around the time you were about to be drafted?*

**Bryan Smith:** Yes sir. I knew, you know, that it was pretty bad. I didn't know if I wanted to go over there or not. But I knew if I was going to help our country, that's where I was . . . If they wanted me to go, I woulda went.

*So after you got the draft notice, how long was it before you were actually on your way to basic training?*

**Bryan Smith:** Oh. Man, that was what, 40-something years ago. It wasn't long. It was a short time. It was within . . . When I got registered . . . Let's see, I got married. Right out of . . . Well, I had quit school and got married. And when I become age, I got my papers.

*So you were married when you got drafted?*

**Bryan Smith:** Yes.

*Tell us a little bit about what that was like, and how your wife dealt with it.*

**Bryan Smith:** She dealt with it real good. I was a . . . Well, I went in in November, I believe it was. The first. And something unusual, they told me. They didn't normally let you out during Christmas. But they let us come home and said that the rate of doing that was real high. A lot of 'em wouldn't show back up. I think we had one that didn't. But I come home and nine months later, we had our first child while I was in Kentucky.

*Oh wow.*

**Bryan Smith:** She was born in a hospital up there.

*In Kentucky. Wow.*

**Bryan Smith:** And she's been havin' a fit, the oldest daughter, to go back and see where she was born. We had never made it back.

*Yeah. So, when you actually got to Vietnam, then, you not only were married . . .*

**Bryan Smith:** I didn't get to Vietnam.

*Oh, you didn't? Okay.*

**Bryan Smith:** No, I ended up going to Germany.

*To Germany? Okay.*

**Bryan Smith:** That was all indications that's where I was going, but I guess the Lord he didn't intend for me to go there.

*Oh, okay. I had misunderstood then. I thought with your dates of service, that you'd been sent to Vietnam at some point during your time there in the Army. Where were you stationed in Germany?*

**Bryan Smith:** Frankfurt. Not Frankfurt, Freiburg.

*So you were there all the way until you got out in '69?*

**Bryan Smith:** Yes. I ended up making SPC-5, I think in July of '69, which they said was unusual for somebody having two years in the service. To make rank that quick.

*Yeah. Tell us a little bit about what it was like serving in Germany at that time. Especially with the Vietnam War going on.*

**Bryan Smith:** That war was really, I guess you could say, wasn't on none of our minds. 'Cause at the time I was there, they was going to have the first election in Berlin. And they was afraid they was gonna be war. War was gonna break out on account of it. And they put us all on alert. And at the time, I didn't have much time left and afraid I was gonna get extended. But they had the election and everything, you know, went fine.

*Yeah. Were you able to bring your family with you to Germany?*

**Bryan Smith:** No, I didn't. 'Cause, like I said, I didn't have but, I think, about nine months left in the service when I went. And I didn't even ask about it. I run up a pretty good phone bill while I was over there.

Yeah, I bet.

**Bryan Smith:** 'Bout once a month, and that was bad enough.

*Yeah. What about other men in your unit in Germany? Had any of them been sent to Vietnam, or were any of them in the process of being sent to Vietnam?*

**Bryan Smith:** Yes sir, I think some of 'em had been. And I think our motor sergeant, best I remember, he had been over there. I don't remember if it was more than once or not. And there was several of the other boys that, you know, enlisted. I think they had been over there. But, like I said, they never really talked that much about it.

*Yeah. That makes sense.*

**Bryan Smith:** And that was, I hate to say, but that was during the time, I guess, when drugs was really coming out. And we had a bunch of 'em there in the company that was foolin' with it. And I really knew nothing about drugs until I got over there and began to hear about it on the radio, around Houston and all. Like I said, I didn't really know what it was. Had no idea.

*When you were sent to Germany, were you with any guys that you'd gone through boot camp with?*

**Bryan Smith:** No sir.

*So you were on your own, individually, sent there?*

**Bryan Smith:** Yes sir. I believe I was the only one out of that company that went.

*And while you were there, did you guys spend a lot of time in the field training and that sort of thing? What was the daily . . .*

**Bryan Smith:** We just spent the normal time. I forget now how many weeks it was in Grafenwöhr. Like a couple weeks we spent out there. Most of the time it was around a motor pool and having alerts. Movin' out and get out a couple of times and turn around and come back. But it was false alert.

*So you were with a tank unit, armor unit?*

**Bryan Smith:** Yes.

*What were the different types of tanks that you primarily used?*

**Bryan Smith:** Well, I think it was M-60s.

*Okay. And were you a mechanic?*

**Bryan Smith:** Yes sir.

*Tell us a little bit about the process of how you learned to be a mechanic on tanks.*

**Bryan Smith:** Well, it come natural 'cause I was a mechanic before I went in. And that was unusual too, they said. 'Cause I had one of the sergeants, come time just before I got out, was trying to get me to re-up, and tried to tell me that I couldn't make it out in civilian life. And I asked him why. He said, "Well, being a mechanic." I said, "I was that before I come in. I don't see why I couldn't be it when I go back out. I have learned a little bit since I been here."

*So he was trying to keep you in and didn't want you to leave.*

**Bryan Smith:** Yes.

*So when you finally got discharged, I think you told me previously is in October of '69, you always knew that you wanted to get out and come back to Texas?*

**Bryan Smith:** Uh-huh.

*Tell us about what it was like when you got back home.*

**Bryan Smith:** Well, I went to work for my . . . Well, let's see, no I didn't go to work for my daddy. I went to work for a man down in Silsbee in a parts house, and I ended up working on boats for a couple years. And then from there I went over to another parts house in Buna, and I worked there for about a year, and then I went to, I believe, it was Rose City, and I worked down

there for about two or three years in a welding shop. And then from there I come back up . . . Well, I think before that I worked a little construction. I worked about two weeks and they went to laying us off. And the boy that was my next door neighbor is the one that got me on, and they come in there that evening and laid us off, I told him, I said, "That's it." He said, "No, what's wrong?" I said, "I want to know where my bean's is coming from for my family. I don't like this working one day and then being off a week or two huntin' jobs." And that's when I went down to that shop in Vidor, and I worked there. And then after that, I come back up here and went in business for myself.

*So you've always been a mechanic pretty much your whole life then?*

**Bryan Smith:** Uh-huh.

*How did you start off as being a mechanic when you were young? Was your father a mechanic?*

**Bryan Smith:** Yeah, he worked on cars and then he got into chain saws, and told me, said that's what I shoulda got into. Says it's not near as dirty a job. You don't get dirt in your face and down your collar working on them.

*Yeah.*

**Bryan Smith:** And you're standing up.

*Are there any particular memories or times or stories of your time in the service that you'd want to share with us? Any amusing anecdotes or things like that from your time in boot camp or any of that sort of thing?*

**Bryan Smith:** No, not in the boot camp. When I was up there in Kentucky in the engineer unit, I had a wreck up there. I was comin' in and rolled one of those 10-ton tractors. And it was something that was fairly new, and when they come to pick it up and they got it back to the echelon to work on it, they called and wanted to be sure that I hadn't got in trouble because the governor had hung up on it.

*Okay.*

**Bryan Smith:** And, of course, everything was already all right 'cause I done told 'em what I'd done.

*Yeah.*

**Bryan Smith:** And then over in Germany when I had that wreck, our battalion commander, I believe it was, he drove up and the boys that was in the tanks, they had been drinking out on the ranges which was . . .

*Yeah, that's not good.*

**Bryan Smith:** Not good, and he said, "Well, somebody's gonna get burned here." Well, we had just met the brigade commander on top of the hill, and when he got back and was standing there talking to the battalion, told 'em, he said, "Well, you know, all them boys was doing right. Every one of 'em was down in the hatches like they were supposed to be, and they wasn't speedin'."

And we had a first sergeant, was a colored first sergeant, and he had been to Vietnam. And when we started over the hill, down the hill there, the . . . I weighed 55 tons I think, and the tank weighed 50 tons, and they was in a Jeep. And that first sergeant told him, he said, "Hold 'em back. Don't let 'em, you know, build up speed." Well, that recovery vehicle had mechanical brakes on it. I was standing up on 'em and I was gaining, and when I finally got them to notice, you couldn't see the back of the Jeep.

*Wow.*

**Bryan Smith:** They was actually up under it, and the driver, he finally looked up and he said something to the first sergeant, and he turned around, and I'd swore he turned white when he seen it. And it was all over, we standing up on there talking and he told us, me and the other boys that was in there, he said, "I've been to Vietnam," I think he said two or three times. He said he was never as scared as he was that day.

*So you guys were very lucky that it wasn't worse.*

**Bryan Smith:** Uh-huh. I was standing up on the brakes and when it went over, they said I was still up trying to stop it. And the hatch hit me in the back of the head when it come around, and I guess I was lucky that it didn't cut my head off.

*Yeah, wow. That's dodging the bullet there.*

**Bryan Smith:** Yes sir.

*Tell us a little bit more about Germany. Did you have a chance to see much of Germany while you were stationed there?*

**Bryan Smith:** Yeah, and I really didn't like it that much. I went to the zoo and I enjoyed the zoo, but as far as the town, outside towns and all, I didn't see that they were as pretty as most people said. There may be better now than they was then, but at the time, I guess, and too, I wasn't over there to really sightseeing 'cause I'd rather been home.

*Sure.*

**Bryan Smith:** I'm guessing my wife would've been there, I might have seen some of the things, and I did like the woods the way they had them, and they had their back trails down the side of the road and all. I thought that was, but as far as the towns and all, you know, there wasn't that much to their houses and all 'cause most of 'em had their house, I think, built over the barn.

*Yeah. Did you have a chance to interact very much with the German people?*

**Bryan Smith:** No, not really. The only time I did was when I went to the post office to make phone calls. If I went out with a few of the boys and I drink a Coke while they was drinking their beer, and I kinda watched 'em, and I did notice how, you know, they pretty much stayed to their self when they was in drinking, and I don't think I ever seen anybody drunk, disorderly. I think we had more of our boys that was that than them.

*Would you usually have weekends off when you were stationed there in Germany?*

**Bryan Smith:** Yeah, we'd have, you know, most of the time either KP or guard duty but we would have days off. I usually just stayed around the barracks.

*Stayed on base?*

**Bryan Smith:** Uh-huh. I was known for our room when orderly come around to wake everybody up, I was usually up before everybody else and I'd wake the rest of 'em up 'cause I went to bed about 6 o'clock every night.

*Let me ask you too, when you were in the service during that time and you would travel when you were going to Kentucky or when you were sent to Germany, did you travel in uniform?*

**Bryan Smith:** Well, I didn't coming back. I did going up.

*You always hear these stories about troops being spit on or mistreated by the public during that time. Did you see any of that?*

**Bryan Smith:** No, I didn't 'cause I never was, you know, out that much. I pretty much stayed to myself then. When I left Fort Polk, they put us on buses and carried us, I don't know exactly where, but they put us on a train, and we went to Nashville and we got off in Nashville and got on buses and they carried us on in to the base and to Kentucky. You know the conductors and all on the train, they was nice to us.

*What about when you were coming home from Germany? You were just in civilian attire that whole way back?*

**Bryan Smith:** Yeah, 'cause I come home early and I caught a flight and, of course, it was during the time of tourists and all, and I had trouble getting a flight out. I had to . . . Well, I ended up on instead of getting civilian flight out, and I guess I was in uniform at that time, 'cause I come home on a paratrooper plane.

*Yeah, that makes sense. So you weren't around civilians when you were flying back?*

**Bryan Smith:** No. The only time I was really around civilians was in the airports coming back from, I guess Philadelphia, when I flew back to Texas.

*You didn't feel like there was any sort of hostility from the average person?*

**Bryan Smith:** No, 'cause I got flew into Houston and I thought I was downtown, and I was out at, what's that . . .?

*Intercontinental?*

**Bryan Smith:** Continental.

*Yeah, that would have been a pretty new airport then I guess.*

**Bryan Smith:** It was. I didn't even know it was there. I got a cab to go to the bus station and we drove and drove and drove and didn't know it.

*That's a long way.*

**Bryan Smith:** I was gonna surprise my wife and I got into Beaumont and come to find out when I got in there about 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning, there wasn't gonna be a bus out 'til 9 o'clock, so I ended up callin' her, and she went around the block twice before she recognized me.

*Why was that?*

**Bryan Smith:** I was sitting on my duffle bag, and I think I had growed a mustache while I was there but she'd seen pictures of me. But it was kinda in a bad part of town. I think she was afraid to stop.

*Yeah, in Beaumont. When were you in Germany from? Do you remember the months and year you were there?*

**Bryan Smith:** Well, let's see. I was in there most of the time in '68. And when I got out of basic training, it was in December or 1<sup>st</sup> of January I think I went over there. And see then I come home, like I said, in I think the first part of October, and I got out on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

*Were you able to follow what was going on back in the U.S. pretty well? I know that '68 was a pretty tumultuous year with everything that was going on with assassinations and the presidential election and riots and that sort of stuff.*

**Bryan Smith:** Well, the assassination happened while I was in Kentucky, Martin Luther King. They put us on alert.

*Because of rioting?*

**Bryan Smith:** As a matter of fact, I was on a three-day leave or a five-day leave, and we was going back, and we went through up there whenever he got shot. We heard it on the radio. And we got back to the company, well, they put us on alert. And, of course, I was living off post. Well, I had to stay on. And then they said we was gonna have to have, put us on alert for riots, and then they decided, "Well, you can't do that 'cause none of ya have any training." Well, we went to training. Well, I was the only one in the company, I think, that didn't get any training. I was working on the Jeeps and stuff trying to get them ready. And I always told 'em, I said, "Well, I'll tell you what. I'm sitting here in the Jeep and y'all start running toward us, you're gonna have to catch the Jeep."

*When you're in Germany and a lot of that was going on, were you able to get news of that through the Armed Forces Radio Network or Armed Forces TV?*

**Bryan Smith:** We didn't have TVs.

*You didn't, okay.*

**Bryan Smith:** We did, you know, radio. See when Martin Luther was going on, I was still here in the States.

*Still stateside.*

**Bryan Smith:** Yeah.



*What about the presidential election that year, in '68? Were you still in the States? Were you able to vote?*

**Bryan Smith:** I think I was. I can't remember for sure.

*Yeah, that would have been November of '68.*

**Bryan Smith:** Been November, yeah. But I was still up in Kentucky.

*Kentucky, yeah.*

**Bryan Smith:** But I don't remember if I voted or not, not back then. They got me now helping 'em do the voting so I've learned a whole lot more about it in the last few years since I've retired.

*That's good. I was going to ask you, going back to basic training at Fort Polk, I've had a chance to go there and do some training myself. I imagine when you were there, were you in the wooden barracks?*

**Bryan Smith:** Uh-huh.

*Tell us a little bit about what you thought of Fort Polk.*

**Bryan Smith:** Well, the hardest part of Polk was all right. It was just, you know, normal drill sergeants. And you go in, you don't know what they can do and what they can't, and they kind of have you buffaloed which I think a lot of that's changed since then. We was in the old barracks and they told us if they caught fire that we didn't have but just, I don't know, a minute or two seemed like to get out.

*Probably right.*

**Bryan Smith:** Because they were so rich lighter. I hadn't been over since they've redone all of it.

*Yeah, I know a lot of it . . . I was there in 2004, and it was . . . They've got a few new parts but there's still a lot of old . . .*

**Bryan Smith:** The old ones?

*Yeah, there's still a bunch of old wooden barracks there, and we stayed in some of those, and you could tell that they'd been built, you know, World War II, 1950 maybe, timeframe. When you were at basic training at Fort Polk, I guess you said you were able to go home for Christmas, but that was the only time you were able to leave, right?*

**Bryan Smith:** Yeah, that's the only time they let us leave.

*What were most of the recruits like in your platoon in boot camp?*

**Bryan Smith:** We all pretty much worked together and every once in a while you'd have somebody do something and it'd cost the whole company some pushups or something. But we pretty well . . . We had one young man that when we first got over there, I don't think he had

ever took a bath in his life, and the sergeant come in with a bar of lye soap and a horse brush, and we gathered him up and carried him down to the shower, and he said, "Give it here." And after that he took a bath every day.

*Where were most of the recruits from? Were they primarily from the south or Texas?*

**Bryan Smith:** Yeah, most of 'em, I think, was from Texas but I was, I guess, one of the closest ones to it. Most of 'em was more out west Texas, and there was a few from around Houston and all. But the area that I'm in here, I think there was one boy that was is that platoon with us that lived not too, 'bout 20, 25 miles from here, and I think he's the one that never showed back up. And they claimed they never even went to try to find him. Said the area he lived in was too bad. Well, I've been all over this part of southeast Texas, and I ain't found a place like that yet.

*Exactly.*

**Bryan Smith:** I didn't understand what was going on there but I figured, you know, it didn't make any difference where you was. You didn't show back up, you're AWOL, they were gonna hunt you.

*Exactly. I would think they probably would have.*

**Bryan Smith:** Uh-huh. But he never did come back to basic training while I was there. Now whether they got him later and he went back through or what happened.

*Would most of the guys that were in your platoon in boot camp, were most of them drafted?*

**Bryan Smith:** I couldn't really say. I can't remember. I would say at least 75% probably was.

*Could you tell? Were there certain guys that, you know, you could tell they didn't want to be there or they didn't want to be trained or that sort of thing?*

**Bryan Smith:** No, I never really noticed that much about that. Everybody pretty well . . . Well, I take it back. There was probably a couple that was, didn't like it.

*Because, you know, you hear nowadays it's an all voluntary force, so when I went to boot camp, obviously we didn't like, you know, a lot of the stuff we were dealing with but we all signed up for it. We all volunteered for it, and I would think maybe it might have been a little different if some of the guys were there and they didn't want to be. I didn't know if that was an issue in your platoon.*

**Bryan Smith:** Back then it was 'cause of the draft, and I still think we oughta have draft myself. I may be different from everybody else but I've always thought just going to all volunteer, I don't think it's . . . You don't get the quality of men that you got back then. At least in some cases, and some cases you maybe get better.

*I guess the one thing that can be said, though, is after going through boot camp, it makes a lot of other things in life seem easy. You don't take things for granted that, you know, that you had previously. Just like being able to sleep in or eat meals at your own pace or anything.*

**Bryan Smith:** Well, you're allowed . . . You only have to have, what is it? Four or six hours of sleep? And it don't mean they have to be consecutive.

*Yeah, it's definitely different in basic training, that is. For an average civilian, I think it's a pretty big wake-up call, even for people that are going in prepared for what they're going into. It's still a life-changing event.*

**Bryan Smith:** Even after you get out of the basic 'cause you still got have somebody to do KP, and I suppose they still have guards all over everything.

*Yeah, fire watch and duties and all that sort of stuff. Exactly. That doesn't change. Well, sir, I really appreciate you taking the time to talk to us. You know, your story is one of many that we try to record and save for posterity, and helps us get a feel for your service. Our goal in this program, we try to interview as many veterans as we can, and we save all these and archive them. And our hope is that, you know, generations from now people will be able to listen to all these individual stories and get a feel for the service and what our troops have done through the years. Is there any closing thoughts or any ideas or anything that you would want to impart?*

**Bryan Smith:** Well, the only thing that I can say is if I had to do it, I'd do it again. It don't matter where I had to go. But I know there's probably a lot of 'em that wouldn't wanna see the service anymore but . . . One thing I can say since I've been going to the veterans hospital, I feel more for the ones that's been in these last wars, seeing the things that's happened to 'em, you know, the ones that's lost limbs and all. And the ones that's mentally, just disturbed from these wars. I feel very fortunate to have come out the way I have, and being able, you know, to say that I've served my country in a capacity that I was told to. And, like I say, I don't regret any of it.

*Yeah, that's great.*

**Bryan Smith:** But I do have compassion for the ones that's had a lot of trouble, like you said earlier, that maybe was spit in the face and different things when they come back from Vietnam and some of these other wars which is . . . You know, we didn't choose to go over there. Our people above us decided that that war needed to be, just like the ones that we're going through over here now.

*That's right, yeah.*

**Bryan Smith:** Some don't think we should be there but we are, and I don't see how we can give up.

*I agree with you. I'm glad that you were never mistreated because I know there were a lot of veterans from Vietnam that were. So that's disheartening when you hear that but I think, hopefully they've tried to do some things over the years now to make it up to some of them, but I really don't know if you ever can, you know?*

**Bryan Smith:** That's true.

*Such a horrible way to treat somebody that served their country. I know everybody here at the Land Office, sir, appreciates your service to our country. Commissioner Patterson is a veteran, and I myself am, and a lot of people that work here, and even people that are here that aren't*

*veterans are very patriotic and are very thankful for your service, and those of your generation that served with you. That's all that this program is about, is about honoring our veterans and saving their stories so they won't be forgotten.*

**Bryan Smith:** I know there's one young man that's in a wheelchair here that, he's bitter. And my grandson had been working for him some, and he come out here, and I understand he drinks a lot now but he kinda abuses the system but I know there's probably a lot of people out there like that, and that didn't sit right with me. I told my grandson, I said, "You know that's not the way to be."

*Yeah, that's right. Hopefully he can get some help somehow and get things turned around.*

**Bryan Smith:** That's what I understand. The reason he's in a wheelchair is he jumped off in a creek. There were several of 'em there, and I don't know if you'd call it military related or not. He was in the service at the time but they all decided to go swimming and he wanted to be the first one and it wasn't that deep, and supposedly, I guess, broke his neck or messed his back up.

*Yeah, he might be there if he was on active duty but it wouldn't have been, I guess, it wouldn't really be service related but . . .*

**Bryan Smith:** But he was in the service when it happened, and then he's getting benefits from it. Like I said, seems like he's trying to abuse some of 'em.

*Yeah, that's a little different from being wounded in action. Well, hopefully he gets some help.*

**Bryan Smith:** That's what happens to the system. You have some men that does, that don't do like they're supposed to or what they're supposed to, and get things that they shouldn't. I know I've been having a time with mine trying to get some help with me. 'Course I never thought about it over the past 40-something years until I got where I couldn't work no more and then I realized, you know, I could get some help from the VA because it all pertains back to it. And I went all those years without having to use them.

*Well, the one thing you can always do, of course, is contact your congressman's office for some assistance. But also talk to the Texas Veterans Commission. I don't know if you've spoken to them or not.*

**Bryan Smith:** Yeah, see I've got a lady that's over our deal here at Woodville, and she's helped me fill out papers and stuff and all that.

*That's the key because they're the ones that will know and they can help you.*

**Bryan Smith:** We sent in papers and they denied everything. So she called, I forget who it was back in Houston, and the guy laughed. Said, "Don't worry about it." Said, "They didn't look at nothing. They just wrote on there 'Denied.'" Said, "Now appeal it." And it made her mad and said, "All the money that they talk about we wastin', and there they're doing that." And he also told her, said, "You know, the system, the way it works, is hopes he dies or he won't fool with it no more." And a lot of that is true.

*That's true.*

**Bryan Smith:** That's just like trying to get on social security, it makes it so hard. You starve to death before you get on.

*Yeah. Well, I think you're in good hands with her, though. I've spoken with her, and yeah, she'll help you out and that's the key because there are so many veterans that . . .*

**Bryan Smith:** She's the one that handed me that paper to fill out and send in.

*That's great.*

**Bryan Smith:** Because she was wanting to get more of the stories from Tyler County here.

*Absolutely.*

**Bryan Smith:** I was hesitant about filling it out. I just did the other day. I wasn't sure if I'd even filled it out right.

*No, we appreciate it. And if you know any other veterans that would like to be interviewed, just have them give us a call because we'd love to interview them.*

**Bryan Smith:** Okay.

*Well, sir, I really appreciate you taking the time today, and again, thank you for your service to our country.*

**Bryan Smith:** You're quite welcome.

*We'll get this interview all finished up and we'll make copies of it, and we'll send copies to you so you can have to give to your friends or family or whatever. And we really appreciate it.*

**Bryan Smith:** It'll be on a CD?

*Yes sir. We'll burn them onto CD so you can play them in any CD player.*

**Bryan Smith:** Okay.

*All right, sir. Thank you again very much.*

**Bryan Smith:** Thank you for calling me.

*Yes sir. Give us a call any time.*

**Bryan Smith:** All right.

*All right, take care.*

**Bryan Smith:** You too.

*Good bye.*

**Bryan Smith:** Bye bye.